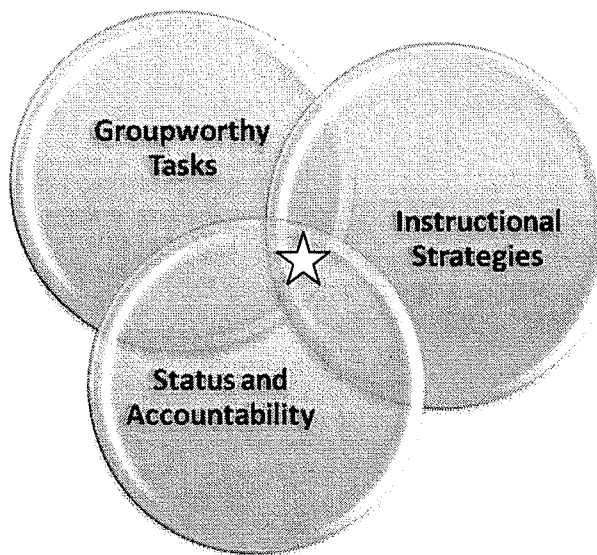


Complex Instruction

Complex Instruction (CI) is a pedagogical approach that can be used in any subject and grade level and “enables teachers to teach at a high intellectual level” (Cohen & Lotan, 1997) through the use of collaborative groups in heterogeneous classrooms. At the core of CI is an awareness of the structural inequities that are generated both in the larger society and within schools and classrooms, which often translate into an assumed hierarchy of competence and therefore affect how students participate with content and the expectations others have for their learning. Complex Instruction aims to “disrupt typical hierarchies of who is ‘smart’ and who is not” (Sapon-Shevin, 2004) and promote equal-status interactions amongst students as they engage with tasks that have high cognitive demand within a cooperative learning environment.

There are three principles of Complex Instruction that, when simultaneously enacted, support equitable participation and learning during cooperative groupwork. These three principles are (1) groupworthy tasks, (2) instructional strategies and (3) status and accountability.



Groupworthy Tasks: Provide tasks that are open-ended, rich in multiple abilities, and support learning important mathematical concepts and skills central to a big idea.

Instructional Strategies: Develop autonomy of and interdependence within each group through the use of norms, roles, and teacher interventions.

Status and Accountability: Raise intellectual expectations for all students, hold individuals and small groups accountable for learning, and intervene in status issues.

References

- Cohen, E. G., & Lotan, R. A. (Eds.). (1997). *Working for equity in heterogeneous classrooms: Sociological theory in practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sapon-Shevin, M. (2004). Introduction. In E. G. Cohen, C. M. Brody & M. Sapon-Shevin (Eds.), *Teaching cooperative learning: The challenges for teacher education* (pp. 1-12). Albany: SUNY.